

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**
Date: July 6, 2007

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GOV. EASLEY SIGNS BILL CHANGING KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT AGE

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley announced today he has signed into law **House Bill 150**, “An act for modifying the school admission requirements to ensure that every child is ready to enter kindergarten and thereby reduce student dropout rates in later grades.” The new law, starting in the fall of 2009, changes the birth date by which a student is eligible to enter kindergarten in North Carolina public schools. Under the new law, children must turn 5 years old by August 31. The current birth date is October 16 for a five-year-old to enroll in kindergarten.

“This change will help assure that children have the physical, emotional and intellectual development they need to learn and succeed when they enter school,” Easley said. “Children begin kindergarten only once in their lives. We must make sure that they prepared for that challenge. If we fail to do so, we risk hindering their educational development for years to come.”

Easley’s More at Four initiative is working to make sure that when at-risk children are old enough to enter kindergarten they are ready to learn. The pre-K academic program operates in all 100 counties in North Carolina through public school districts, child care centers and Head Start agencies. There are about 19,000 pre-schoolers enrolled in More at Four programs around the state. He has proposed expanding More at Four by 10,000 more slots in his 2007-09 budget proposal.

The primary sponsor of the legislation include Rep. Dale Folwell (R-Forsyth). Co-sponsors were Rep. Earline Parmon (D-Forsyth), Rep. Louis Pate (R-Wayne) and Rep. Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland). The bill was carried in the Senate by Sen. Charlie Dannelly (D-Mecklenburg). The bill passed the House on a 106-2 vote and passed the Senate by a vote of 44-0.

It is estimated that the new school-start birth date will affect about 15,300 school children. The law is effective immediately and the new kindergarten enrollment age requirement takes effect with the start of the 2009-2010 school year.

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